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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2016
TAGS: PREL KPAL KWBG PHUM IS
SUBJECT: FATAH CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING: FEW RESULTS, LOTS
OF CRITICISM

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The August 23-25 meeting of the Fatah Central Committee (FCC) in Amman produced few if any results. Participants stated publicly that no firm date has been set for the Sixth Fatah Congress, but announced ongoing efforts to field representatives. Separately, FCC sources said the Committee approved PA President Mahmoud Abbas' (Abu Mazen) efforts to pursue a national unity government. FCC member Ahmad Quraya' (Abu Ala'a), who had just returned from Amman, told the Consul General on August 29 that the results were mixed. In conversations with ConGenoffs on August 28, Fatah grassroots members expressed doubt that the Congress would be held anytime soon and dismay at the lack of progress at the FCC meeting, noting that the senior leadership seems geared toward delaying any progress toward leadership change. Jibril Rajoub also dismissed the whole exercise as "a farce" in speaking with the Consul General. End summary.

FCC Meeting

¶12. (C) The Fatah Central Committee (FCC) held a three-day meeting in Amman, August 23-25, to discuss the internal Palestinian situation and preparation for the Sixth Fatah Congress. (Note: The last Fatah party congress was convened in 1989. End note.) FCC participants, including Nabil Sh'ath, told the media that no specific date had been set for the congress, but the FCC had nevertheless agreed to continue work toward selecting representatives from the geographic districts in the West Bank and Gaza in order to hold the congress in early 2007.

Abu Ala'a: Muted on
Sixth Congress

¶13. (C) During an August 29 meeting with the Consul General, former PA Prime Minister and FCC member Ahmad Quraya' (Abu Ala'a) was muted in his evaluation of the meeting. "It was not good, but it was not bad," Abu Ala'a said. (Comment: This lukewarm description is probably the most positive that we have heard from any contacts. End comment.) The key issue under discussion was the setting a date for the Sixth Congress. Despite a serious discussion on the matter, Abu Ala'a said participants could not agree on timing. He indicated that, by November 30, all documents and preparations for the congress should be in place and a date could be set. At that stage, the FCC would reconvene to decide where and when to hold the Sixth Congress, most likely next March or April. Abu Ala'a did acknowledge that the aim of the congress would be to reform the FCC by electing new members.

Fatah Grassroots and
Revolutionary Council Unconvinced

¶4. (C) During an August 28 meeting with ConGen officers in Ramallah, Fatah legislative and grassroots leaders -- all of whom are critical of the FCC -- expressed doubt that there would be a Sixth Congress anytime soon. Former PLC member Oaddura Faris indicated that he had little hope that the FCC would announce a date for the congress, let alone stick to it. He acknowledged that there is considerable cynicism among the rank and file Fatah members on the sincerity of the senior Fatah leadership to hold elections. He also noted that considerable work lay ahead to hold the congress, including holding district elections for party delegates in the West Bank, Gaza, and outside and establishing a political platform for the congress. Another key decision would be the venue for the congress, which Faris indicated may be held simultaneously in separate locations in Gaza, the West Bank, and elsewhere. Faris also said he thought the way ahead for Fatah would lie in rebuilding its connections to the Palestinian population and reviving a grassroots base.

¶5. (C) In an August 29 meeting with the Consul General, Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member Jibril Rajoub expressed his complete disgust with the FCC members, whom he described as without any "national devotion or commitment." He saw no reason that Abu Mazen should listen to them and suggested half of them should be in "VIP rooms at an Egyptian psychiatric hospital." He dismissed the likelihood that the FCC would change or expand its membership; e.g., to include some of the young guard. He said he prefers to rebuild Fatah from the inside from the ground up. He anticipated there might be a response along these lines from the FRC.

Comment

¶6. (C) Seven months after Fatah's debacle in the January legislative council elections, Fatah seems no closer to instituting institutional changes. The lack of urgency among the senior members -- most of whom are 70 years and above -- and their predilection to postpone the Sixth Congress into next year is likely driven by their unwillingness to cede power to a younger cadre of Fatah leaders. The lack of progress on preparations for the Sixth Congress has underscored the central dysfunction that represents Fatah today, namely, a frozen leadership unprepared to reform.

WALLES